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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 004594

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [IZ](#) [IS](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: SFRC STAFFER TALWAR'S MEETING WITH FM MUASHER

Classified By: AMBASSADOR EDWARD W. GNEHM FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

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SUMMARY  
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1. (C) Foreign Minister Muasher met with the DCM, Poloff, and SFRC Staffer Puneet Talwar on August 13. Most of the discussion revolved around the MEPP and Iraq. FM Muasher applauded the U.S. commitment to a three-year time-frame for a Palestinian state, but urged that the U.S. come up with a plan of action on how to achieve it. Muasher appeared to expect a U.S. action against Iraq, and while emphasizing the uncertainties and risks for Jordan, said "this is not 1990," and pointed out the importance of the U.S. relationship for Jordanians. End Summary.

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MEPP: WE NEED A ROAD MAP  
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2. (C) The President's June 24 speech changed the landscape, according to Muasher, and the GOJ viewed the 3-year time-frame in the speech positively. The GOJ's diplomatic efforts now are focused on pressing for a plan of action to reach that goalpost. Muasher said the Jordanians were reassured during the King's visit by the President's reiteration of the U.S. commitment to the three-year time-frame beginning on June 24. The Jordanians in Washington had also stressed that the U.S. needed to develop a workplan that would tell the Palestinians exactly what lay ahead, otherwise average Palestinians would not be engaged.

3. (C) Muasher had some general comments on what the road map should include. First, the three-year time-frame needs to be solid. Muasher pushed the idea of an international monitoring group to ensure progress continued. Second, Muasher said the settlement needed to be comprehensive and include solutions for Syria and Lebanon. The Syria/Lebanon tracks did not have to begin at the same time or move at the same pace as the Palestinian track. Muasher understood the importance of dealing with the Palestinian issue first, but "by the end of the three years, there needs to be Syrian and Lebanese solutions as well".

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SAUDIS IN FOREFRONT  
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4. (C) Muasher stressed the importance of Saudi engagement. "This time they are following up, they are pressing people, convincing the Syrians to cooperate...they are playing a much more active role than the Egyptians." When asked about the Egyptians, Muasher said confidentially that "in the end, they go along with the Jordanian and Saudi ideas, but they have no ideas of their own, they have no clear idea on how to move forward."

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ARAFAT: GIVE THE PEOPLE A REAL CHOICE  
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5. (C) When asked about Arafat, Muasher expressed his frustration with the Palestinian leader. "We are all frustrated with Arafat...he has not accepted change or the need to evolve." Although Muasher agreed in principle to the need for reform of the Palestinian leadership, he thought the U.S. approach was a bit heavy-handed. Muasher encouraged the U.S. to reinforce the three-year timeline with a road map and present it in clear terms for the Palestinians--what will it be, a state in three years or Arafat? Given the choice--with a clearly defined path to a Palestinian state--Muasher believed the Palestinians would choose a state. But without such a road map, people would be reluctant to speak or act against Arafat, lest they be branded traitors. If there is only a promise of additional negotiations for a state, then the Palestinian people have nothing to gain from removing Arafat. Although Muasher thought it was imperative for the Palestinians to do more on security issues, he was very encouraged by financial reform.

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GOJ-ISRAEL TIES  
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16. (C) When asked about the Jordanian-Israeli bilateral relationship, Muasher said that there had been little movement in the relationship or useful diplomatic contact with the Israeli government in recent months. The Jordanians still talk to Ben Eliezer, but the relationship with Peres has weakened. Muasher opined that the Labor party was in complete disarray. "Ben Eliezer will tell you things at variance with Sharon, and Peres will tell you things at variance with his own party." Muasher said improvement in the relationship had to be reciprocal. "If we returned our Ambassador to Tel Aviv without any Israeli action, then people would see the normalization steps as further capitulation to Israel without anything in return. But if we sent back our Ambassador, and the Israelis did something in kind, that would mean something."

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IRAQ: RESIGNATION AND CONCERN  
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17. (C) While Muasher confirmed the GOJ public stance that Jordan "will not invade Iraq" (i.e., take a direct role in the attack), he stressed that the Jordan of 2002 was not the Jordan of 1990. "We have a strong strategic relationship with the U.S. that we will not jeopardize." At the same time, Muasher said the GOJ cannot afford to take a public stance against Iraq. "I don't think the U.S. will ask us things that we cannot deliver; on the other hand, we don't want to put the U.S. in a difficult position." Muasher underscored the negative economic consequences for Jordan of an attack and reiterated the GOJ expectation that the U.S. will help Jordan in the short term. Muasher said the length of any offensive would be critical. "Bombing civilians for two weeks will be much different than if the campaign went on for six months. This is not 1990...people are not concerned about Saddam, but the Iraqi people."

18. (U) Mr. Talwar did not have an opportunity to clear this message before departing Jordan.  
Gnehm